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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 001737

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: A/S SCHWARTZ'S MEETING WITH LT. GEN. NADEEM,
LEADER OF PAKISTAN'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE EFFORT

Classified By: Gerald M. Feierstein, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a July 24 meeting with Assistant Secretary for Population, Migration and Refugees Eric Schwartz, Lt. General Nadeem Ahmad outlined the planned assumption by the Provincial Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA) of programmatic responsibility for the GOP's coordination of early recovery and reconstruction. On August 14, Nadeem and his 11th Corps will assume responsibility for military operations in Buner, Dir, Shangla and Swat, but a small core of Nadeem's Special Support Group will remain to monitor and evaluate reconstruction efforts in areas of return. A/S Schwartz, while fully acknowledging reasons for promoting early return of the displaced to their home districts, stressed the importance of the voluntariness of that return. He noted that precipitous return could result in a secondary displacement with all its humanitarian implications, another humanitarian crisis, a decrease in popular support for the GOP's security objectives in areas of return, and increased difficulty in raising further international assistance funding. He stressed the importance of adhering to humanitarian principles and the political importance of being able to face the scrutiny of the U.S. Congress on the voluntariness of return. In response, Nadeem pointed to the extent of spontaneous return and to return prior to the July 13 commencement of the GOP's expedited return program.

¶2. (C) A/Schwartz also stressed the importance of allowing humanitarian assistance providers to continue to assist the displaced upon return and noted the connection between development and security objectives. Nadeem agreed but noted the potential difficulty of working in the areas of return and the need for a small foreign footprint. Nadeem raised concern about the GOP's current assistance focus on the displaced from Malakand Division at the expense of those from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). He expressed appreciation for the responsiveness of the U.S. Government's assistance, and the Assistant Secretary assured him of our continued support. End summary.

U.S. Humanitarian Support for Pakistan

¶3. (SBU) In a July 24 meeting with PRM A/S Eric Schwartz, Lt. General Nadeem Ahmad, the GOP's operational lead for emergency response to the displacement, noted that Pakistan's

most substantial financial support in the displacement crisis has come from the United States. He expressed appreciation for the show of support evident in the number and level of U.S. officials, including Ambassador Holbrooke and Admiral Mullen, who had visited the displacement camps. He called the interest and support shown by the Ambassador and her staff exceptional and said that two things made his job immeasurably easier. The first was the exceptional response of the government and people of Pakistan to their fellow displaced citizens, and the second was knowing he could count on the United States to provide him what he needed quickly if he just asked. He cited particularly the water trucks, environmentally controlled tents, and meals ready-to-eat provided by the U.S. military. He commented that, "People have started to know the soft face of the United States."

Return and Early Recovery

¶4. (SBU) Nadeem said that the overall humanitarian response to this complex emergency was better than that to the 2005 earthquake. On returns, he said that as of July 23 there had been a 39 percent return by the displaced to their home districts and that people were enthusiastic about returning, raising Pakistani flags and stepping up to identify "the bad guys." He stressed the importance of keeping up the momentum to maintain this enthusiasm and looked to the U.S. to take the lead on assisting recovery and reconstruction. Nadeem said that of the total population of 960,000 families in the conflict-affected districts, 320,000 families had been

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displaced, and 640,000 had stayed behind. Those returning would carry a one-month supply of food and would also receive the government-promised PKR 25,000 rupee grant (USD 305) per family, food for six months, a tool kit and some agricultural items. He commented that following the earthquake, vulnerable people were provided PKR 3000 per month for six months, and others were provided cash and food for work. He noted that the same kind of provisions would be needed for the displaced.

¶5. (C) Nadeem said that as the focus of attention shifts from relief to early recovery and reconstruction, his Special Support Group would "fade out" while programmatic responsibility for recovery and reconstruction would be passed to the Provincial Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA). He added that, as of August 14, his 11th Corps would assume responsibility for military operations for Buner, Dir, Shangla and Swat but that he would keep a small core group of people, "a smaller Special Support Group", to monitor and evaluate the reconstruction efforts. He would also have the responsibility of addressing community, law and order, and governance issues and thus would remain very much involved.

¶6. (C) Nadeem identified as a problem the GOP's current assistance focus on Malakand Division at the expense of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and particularly the displaced of Bajaur and Mohmand. He said that any assistance provided in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and not in FATA would have repercussions and that FATA must be included in any relief and recovery effort.

¶7. (C) Assistant Secretary Schwartz stressed to Lt. General Nadeem the value of giving assistance providers the chance to go back to the areas of return in order to sustain the exposure of the returnees to development and the broader community. He pointed to the nexus between development and security objectives. Nadeem agreed, commenting that the NGOs now know the village elders and can help create the bridge from relief to recovery. However, he noted that it may not be as easy to work in the areas of return as in the areas of displacement and that it would be important to keep the foreign footprint down (to, for example, one expatriate visit

per month). A/S Schwartz noted the importance of ensuring that the kind of assistance provided by the international community can be integrated with Pakistani government programs.

¶8. (C) Nadeem described the envisioned assistance process whereby PaRRSA will be the clearing house for all proposed assistance projects. Work on the project (materials, adherence to specifications, oversight) will be monitored by Nadeem's reduced Special Support Group to "help partners improve the quality of their program" and also to ensure that the government could "backfill" between more high profile projects others might choose to do.

Concerns Regarding Voluntariness of Return from Camps

¶9. (SBU) According to statistics presented to the Assistant Secretary by Lt. General Nadeem, as of July 23, 125,675 families (or 39 percent) of a total of 324,459 verified, registered displaced families had returned to their districts of origin. About 47 percent of these returnees, 59,436 families, had returned since the start of the GOP's return program on July 13. Of those, approximately 30 percent (17,269 families) have returned from camps.

¶10. (C) A/S Schwartz acknowledged to Lt. General Nadeem that the impetus for urging return of the displaced was undeniable and that the extent of spontaneous return from hosting communities was an indicator of its voluntariness. He further acknowledged that camps are an environment in which development cannot take place but in which camp inhabitants can be subject to bad influences and recruitment. However, A/S Schwartz raised issues of concern regarding the government's program of expediting the return of the

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displaced. (Note: For NGO accounts of returns see septels. End note.)

¶11. (C) A/S Schwartz made the following points to Lt. Gen. Nadeem:

-- If the displaced return home before conditions are right and then have to flee a second time, there is potential for more misery - creating both another humanitarian crisis and a detriment to support for the government's broader policy objectives.

-- If people displace a second time, it will be even more difficult to rally international funding for humanitarian assistance than it has been thus far.

-- Adherence to humanitarian principles -- articulated in the Return Policy Framework signed by NWFP authorities -- is critical. Return must be voluntary, informed, safe and dignified.

-- Finally, he highlighted the political importance of ensuring voluntary return. He noted that while he would testify in his upcoming appearance before the U.S. Congress that Pakistan has engaged in a fundamental way to address its humanitarian crisis and is making a monumental effort, Members of Congress will want to be assured that IDP return is voluntary as it considers further humanitarian assistance and support to Pakistan.

¶12. (C) Promising to be "forthright" in his response to these points, Lt. General Nadeem mentioned his background in having addressed two previous disasters. He said that every relief organization seeks to perpetuate relief and that unless relief is over, reconstruction cannot begin. He alleged the existence of a "whispering campaign" in the camps to promote the idea that security was insufficient in the areas of return. A/S Schwartz replied that serious,

professional and dispassionate humanitarian assistance providers, who were likely also to provide assistance in the areas of return, had voiced concern about the pressures to return. Noting that the government "has leverage only over the 10-15 percent" of displaced who are in the camps, Nadeem said that approximately 126,000 families had returned to their districts of origin as of July 23 and that 75 percent of that return had been spontaneous. He noted that Swatis all want to go back while Bajauris want to wait for the situation at home to stabilize. He also pointed to the fact that return is not a prerequisite for receipt of the PKR 25,000/family payment, which is, in fact, distributed prior to return.

¶13. (C) The Assistant Secretary stressed that it will be important that the GOP clearly articulate that people who are afraid to return home will not be forced to do so. Nadeem replied that people were not being forced and that, on the contrary, he did not have enough buses and trucks to meet the demand for return. On the previous day, which was a break day for those facilitating return, people were still clamoring for transportation to go back.

¶14. (SBU) Although A/S Schwartz and General Nadeem did not come to closure on this issue, the tone and tenor of the meeting were very cordial, with the General and the A/S sharing stories about mutual friends and general issues of humanitarian assistance. In closing, the Assistant Secretary reiterated deep U.S. admiration overall for Pakistan's handling of the humanitarian emergency and assured Lt. General Nadeem of the continuing support of the United States.

¶15. (U) A/S Schwartz has cleared this cable.
FEIERSTEIN